Dance Monkey: A Collection of Great Dance Poems

Adam Fieled

Dance Monkey

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Cover illustration of Curious George

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I. Beams

Rough Justice

When rough justice means winter solstice,
harbingers of doom, hung branches,

I commiserate with factotums
working for your expulsion from

Germantown Avenue, Chestnut Hill,
bleeding leeches in cafes, twerps

manning registers, occupying
positions of total, totalized authority,

I pray for your extinction,
prayer happens in a thousand syllables,

drop a line into the Chestnut Hill Hotel,
no maître d, only waiters, wait—

Matisse

Matisse spends time these days
at the Stone Rose on Fayette Street,

where he orders a double
rum & Coke to drink with his

dinner, but they won't put the Coke
in it, they want him drunk

with no sweetness in his mouth,
he, and I, can't see why—

dancers in a ring surround our table

Dance Monkey

They played *Dance Monkey*
at a convenient moment, loudly,

they played *Blinding Lights*,
even a double shot of Taylor Swift,

the room swirled, drinks were had,
but the ambiance sagged,

I was left with a sense
of being half-bedraggled, you

could've been my dance monkey
then, I gave you a see-to,

but it seemed to you more
important, I suppose, to marry mascara.

Anita Berber

You'd never guess, my darling,
that being robotic in a flame war,

after stashing the booty
of libertine sensuality

(you could be Anita Berber, *edge-play*)
creates a contradiction

best left unmanned, even
as the shape and structure of your

Berlin appear in a diagram
alongside the contagious fires

you left for me to fall into,

and I get up to be the *edge-player* I am again.

Formal Gesture

Cannot the text go right to
a saying of points in

the middle of things—? It's
where text, we thought,

was supposed to be,
cutting straight down

a rhetorical middle,
even as the saying happens

by sashaying around saying—
that's the point. I put

the text on the shelf, next
to Keats. Formal gesture, right?

Blonde Giantess

The stance of the blonde giantess, huddled
around a family of gators, pokes

into notions of espionage developed
to tell me not to do this,

which is what I do to establish
my own stance, around

a family of bed-posts, devotees of
bed-posts, guarantees of bed-post wishes

fulfilled, back when the pizza guy
tipped us just for being ourselves, every detail.

Reconnaissance

Bella, misshapen adolescent, accosts me on
Black Walnut Lane, as I gasp, grunt,

gesture at the Hotel California
magnificence all around (just trying to

get from Butler to Ridge and back),
and the reason (jaded) I call her Bella Lugosi,

it's because on summer nights in
Plymouth Meeting, houses move themselves

into position to take over flats,
such as mine at Carriage Hill, but harmless

as vampires in movies.
Bella's in this vampire flick, *Reconnaissance*.

You-Scanned

Ava Gardner, Jesus Christ, Caligula and Kenny Rogers
stood in a line, to buy frozen meals, bananas,

I watched the compassionate way Jesus handled
Caligula's heavy karma, which was by

no means invisible to Kenny Rogers,
bemused by the obvious sense they all had

of Caligula having onerous burdens to trundle.
Jesus was supportive, but Ava

was there to kill as usual,
stuck the boot in where it hurt, Caligula

couldn't resist making a pass, so
when John Keats walked by on stilts, he

was treated to the sight of emperor immolation, *You-scanned*.

Tarantulas and Poetry

Cupcakes in basements,
brown sprinkles on orange icing, tell me

they have tarantulas down here sometimes, in
the middle of the night, laughing

at the way the human race is forced
by an advanced brain to

cover everything up, leave out
the fun stuff on the surface (everybody kill!),

but when the spiders take their asses
to places where humans are,

you can see they mean the same
thing as us (they say), usually, but I don't,

I tell them, afraid to crush
their little jelly legs, with poetry, like this.

Decomposing

"What's Beethoven doing these days," he asked,
as I waited to hear about guys

walking into bars, "What," my rejoinder,
also knowing the proverb

of the two-sided apple was close at hand,
"Decomposing," he said, big

strapping dude that he was, but I was
quick to remind him, "You're a buffoon, and I

refuse to embrace your game." Night had
nodded-off in Conshohocken,

the parking lot glistened. Beethoven
was fine where he was, thank you very much.

Noumena

A certain "nausea in the hands"
overtakes consciousness overburdened with café

life, here in Conshohocken—
mesmeric mannequins prattle on in earnest

about New Orleans, Memphis, Seattle—
(them only being from around the neighborhood)

where she's been hiding all these years
I have no idea, only seeing it's

a hovel here, and she had ways out (I thought),
heists against the *noumena*,

as here manifest, superior prattle— solipsism's *in-itself*

Thirteen Circles

I got the moonstone at Thirteen Circles
where the girls subsist as witches,

I subsist as a witch-stalking warlock.
Everybody talks to the stones

there, the stones dream future concupiscence
when they're in the mood, which they

are today, so as I burn some Dragon's Blood
incense, evocations and incantations

abound, until I get objective and start quantifying
(still having to pay for the stones)—

self-evidence casts its spell.

Double-Squared Bar

epochs passed, eternities were achieved
just for me to order a perfect

double vodka-tonic at uno, where the rabble
deal in corners, as nina pulls no

punches against a sense of sincere
whoredom (take his hand, off to the loo).

twenty years ago in center city,
we sat at L2 on 22nd and south, with a minor

poet and his fainting wife. now i think i see
nina faint, and she can be my double—

faint upwards, please, into a double-squared bar.

CV

as her eyes mastered mine,
wouldn't let go of the incumbent moment,

all sense surreally spun around us,
idiots filling coffee cups, bums buying pastries—

the eyes were more tenacious than
5 am misery, when you need more sleep,

little more than a girl, zen mastering
me, all of her physiology aimed at my body,

draining different portals, Object
authoritatively co-opting Subject, wrestling

for an undivided place in the Subject,
gazing at me from inside me, into ontology,

addressing Being for both of us— Time applied, with a CV.

Sluice-Rich

some video camera will certainly be there
to measure the circumference

of the pentagram, how you get shot up
(accentuating the kahlo eyebrows)

the camera is our friend, blood on the lens,
blood on our clothes, blood

spattered on the black edges of the pentagram,
blood an alphabet of losses and gains,

the objective truth, a garish display of wares,
but our love, beleaguered as it is,

triumphs over all of it, the blood Outside,
blood channels Being the same,

Object fastened, strapped, with sharp blades, sluice-rich—

Picasso

You thought, after all these years,
approach to the bar (of sorts) would be

easy— it is, only because I know
when I am being handed a tool to make

an incision, in painting, into a brain
about idiots like us— thus Picasso to his

mistress, as birds settled
on wires, the sinking sun sent its rays

in battalions over a ripe landscape,
somewhere near Paris— now, I'm writing,

I feel the same way about you,
we're mad— I think, after all these years.

A Conversation

She said, you can't show Heidegger
a world that dystopic, where everyone's, y'know,

a dealer, and where rules of the jungle
apply. Rilke lives in exquisite, space-cadet

heaven, which is where Heidegger wants
to live, too. Well, I said, I'm not

dealing to Heidegger, I'm dealing to you.
Right, but you keep forgetting—

I'm a space-cadet, too. We got
out of the car at the Red Stone Grill.

It was an open venture laid out
before us, with nothing concealed, and some ribs.

II. Apparition Poems

#2023

when the shit
hits the fan is
when it's deep
shit, so, OK, I
get it, no shit—

#2024

I cleaned out my
mind, only to find
that poetry needs
dirt to properly
germinate, so I'm
leaping into the
mud here, where
it's brain deep, to
get healthy again—

#2025

Whatever form she takes, I
told him, watch for the rose-
bud lips to do their wonted
trick, of amorous suggestion
in an underhanded fashion
attempting to obfuscate her
taking the piss of you being
for real, but it was too late
for him, rose had begotten
stone, oh no, on to the next—

#2026

You'd never guess from
the suburbs, why some of
us desperately long for
the city— excitement,
the motif you never hear
here, is A major, forever—

#2027

strike me down with mono
I answer you, aglow, in stereo—

and critique your elocution into the bargain

#2028

If I were to mention, to her,
the word itself, *decolletage*,
and if she really were a demon,
don't you think it reasonable
that the demoness, were she
to deflate, might have no words
right back…would just repeat,
to herself, *decolletage*, all night?

#2029

My life, I narrated to Alexa,
couldn't be any less like
The Moon and Sixpence
if I painted the walls a garish
tint of jungle green. Then, I
realized (oops!) I did just
paint my walls a garish tint
of jungle green. And there was
a model on the divan.

A model train, that is.

#2030

Perfectly objective, I'll
give you a god-damned
pure reason I threw away
your smart phone—

or don't you already know *a priori*?

#2031

Drabness of a walk
down Butler Pike,
in ice, no sidewalk—

tire-tracks skirt the sky

#2032

I never fret
or have regrets
when the season
brings pine needles
dispersed over parking
lot concrete, right outside
my flat, the big open field on
the left being a permanent repository
space for such enterprises, and for skies—

#2033

To look ridiculous
is to be too individuated—
to be yourself too much,
and mean it— I have how
many arrows stuck through
my head? The garbageman
was both wise and a wise-ass.
I'm glad he took his thoughts away.

#2034

"I" looks for "you"
all over the fucking
place, and if "I" can't
find "you" he'll just
pretend he did, and,
y'know, start making
up stuff. That's the
chautauqua for the night
on the non-objectivity
of poetry, said Caligula,

leaning into a hump-back
purchased on the Boulevard.

#2035

If I have to be a pest
to ransack my own memory
banks for the kind of fodder
I can use, so be it—

Lavender incense burned the bordello

#2036

Poetic form on a smorgasbord—
I chose the sonnet to work
with a real long time ago,
followed Italian and English roads
to get to a new kind of home

if you thought this would get to fourteen lines
I re-volta

#2037

Stifled with sickness, prone
as I am to wasting diseases,
I keep running into Tess
of the mother-fucking D'urbervilles,
she keeps mouthing *Baby One More Time*
to me, I have no idea how to answer

except to mouth back "I'm not that innocent"

#2038

Jesus, Sasha really puts some force
behind the idea that physical sex,
coitus, is just earth-sign nonsense
in the end, the pressing of the right
buttons. I try to be the deep water
dude I am, and pull her under, but

her mountainous curves are not to
dunked. So if it's all just earth, where
does the soul part go in all the screaming?

(I keep waking up in the Sri Lanka region)

#2039

Eleven years past Byron,
I collect dues of frissons,
other paraphernalia of jouissance
from images in the air,
images on the ground, images
wielding hatchets the right way
at country clubs, art museums,
and galleries, now that the ladies
can comfortably chow down
on something other than rice and vegetables—

the steak of cultural enfranchisement tastes sweet

#2040

When a metaphor becomes itself,
puts the pedal to the metal,
I want to be the one riding bitch
on the plush-lined back seat
so that I generate (from tension!) new metaphors
also putting their pedal to the metal,
and the car I'm speaking of is Noah's Ark,
I'm the one that got everything in there—

#2041

A quarter of a century
has passed
since I took the teenage
townie to a new place
transgressive
in a subletted room
on West Nittany
if I have no regrets
it's because those piles

on that carpeted floor
have passed into
ink somewhere
past that room—
she has too.
the second phase of the game.

#2042

Life follows from life—

if the mirrors don't crack
when you give them the old
right hook, understand that
what you've just risked has
saved you the trouble of

what it means to eat ambulance—

#2043

For God to be God
God has to be something else
the manifestation of a center point
of perfectly well-rounded goodness
incorrigibly manning the ambiguous
affirming all sides of every equation
responsive both personally, impersonally
conscious and unconscious

but then, being there and not somewhere else
the Ontological Argument falls flat
God's not God
for God to be God

#2044

Girls who pick up
mobile orders
seem to say something
about mobility,
what it means to order—

mocha cold brew syntax
grammatology of
mocha's matrix—
it's tactile, what I order—

#2045

Morning pile-up
a car-wreck on Ridge Pike
auto-destruct impulses
Dada realizations
a physiology of disgust
for cops waiting for donuts
traffic waiting to man offices
retail employees rubber necking

I feel the landscape gutter-ball,
mirror back a façade of gnarled metal—

#2046

I got older
learned about sight lines

like how you look
with the floor, your feet blocked—

something's gutted in Starbucks

#2047

I have written
the poems
that were in the icebox
and which you were probably
hoping to power-block
forgive me
they are delicious
so sweet
and so cold

III. Madame Psychosis

Kylie (Egress)

kylie's hair being extremely. lank.
like what the porcelain gaze means,
cast out from a glass center (heart
of glass). look, I may be waiting
here for someone else. or else, kylie's
long fluttering lashes give her cartoon
cred. red nails take the tigress motif
to a strange locale, tigresses with ESP

dig into the brains of those around
them. what, you thought I know something?
you're really something. stained glass tigress.
tell me, from the center— will you get, become, humpty?

Jennifer Finestadt

Take a mien (cultivated innocence)
and twist it, so that a puckered-up look,
implying concupiscence, bedraggles
the idea that male of the species have
ever seen anyone else.
As though a machine
subsists somewhere, delivering you (and whoever)
to a transcendental plateau of complete animal,
physical satisfaction, so you do the head-dance of
the Cambodian mistress (*you're not being fertile
with me*), you need us to be sexy, if we can't
be, it's because by instinct we understand
the game only too well,
who you are in it
why it's Cambodia for us too
why fertility is you turned over
into the oblivion of a salty ocean—

Joan James

Bambi-eyed, apotheosis of the demure
brunette, and oh the weight of *decolletage* so
about a phenomenology of suspense (*now you
see 'em, now you don't*), you've left the entire
Delaware Valley in a haze of loose saliva,
overstimulated glands, even as you change
form so lightly, only an expert could detect,
from Bambi eyes and breasts, that it's you
again under there, making sure a Bible gets
written of temptation tales, just from raw
lust after your shapeliness, your Highness,
and I laugh when the Bambi eyes hit me,
so soft, so caressing, so an invitation to
male ardor, if you don't know that the *telos*
of your enterprise is utter humiliation,
combined with a new realism (what a pair
of breasts are, *that is the case*) to a few suicide Jacks—

Scooter (Blondie)

Always an avalanche or landslide away
from interior insolvency, the feeling that
you've given yourself, your soul away for
nothing— as you whiz down scene after
scene, wind in your golden tresses, how
could you be more underscored to me? It's
all in the way you feel that mountain within
yourself, what I, or someone, could make

move, if I prove to be man enough, if I
could just touch you from a place of really
meaning it, which I can, and the next time we
score I promise the trail up the mountain
will be assayed as scenic beauty personified,
and when you continue to whiz around you
will be loved as only a moving mountain might be.

Jessica

It's brains worth preserving— things
behind other things, but for an entire
entity, Jessica, a totality— nothing missing—
built of vulnerable metaphor, nature
being/not being a shield— or a series
of vaginal portents— it all seems so
portentous now, as flowers in a vase
of not-dry clay— rivers incompletely
circumscribed— pastures arrayed in
summer colors— things behind other
things, again, was always something
behind someone else, you've proven to be—
the Contoocook still stands there, behind itself—
she's your own rope-swing to you, structured—

Veronica Yeates

& as a scorching. to fit in a kind of
cubby-hole. a refresher course in the art
of proposition. but only to scope out
a spectacle. derived. from a kind of theater
of cruelty. you threaten me with death, or
death-in-pornography. the brain floats
skywards. as the propellors turn. always,
with great rapidity. confining curses. the sewer
seeds itself up. you are the screen. means it.

you come, completely colored. and as a scorching
not contained between your pat and hoots

Kimberly

Why, she doth bestride the narrow
world, but not like a colossus. Rather,
the bigness of the more rare roses.
Yet, you'll be forced by her circumstances
to pick someone else, if you want
affirmations which ring of the courtly.

Yet she's sporty— behind the wheel, everywhere
else. Lugging the kids around, including
a nubile, whose forest dreams exceed
the particulars of Conshohocken life, moored
to the shore by protocols, degraded by the mutt-nudniks.

Be ceremonious, handling the mutts. Own the bark market.

Christina Gala

you wake up in flames, drowned, too.
fiercely pierced, tongued. well, soul
sister, i guess we've landed again in
atlantis, where the air to breathe is
redolent of the strange, the uncanny. i
guess the point of us being here is that
the fire is meant to be purgative for
both of us. shots ring out, as usual. i
guess i'm ready to admit which ones are mine;

i live and die with you where ferns, shots whine

Diana Oeuvre

so if you just casually slip down
into the deep water, and i find you there,
coy, not coy, gay, not gay, real (this
is the most important), not real,

what am i supposed to say when a moving
tide disturbs what could've been a placid
surface? worship the deep water, but you
have to stay dry about your own depths;

or maybe i'm lost in boiling myself,
easy to get lost in it, your bubbles—

So Long, Marianne

she's who she is, at odd angles
to anything but an avalanche, what
clods get dumped on innocent
bystanders can't be considered her fault
(along with stones rolling), so she'll
occupy a sharp crag and watch as what
gets covered amounts to water and air
for those who pursue color—

Fragment: Jennifer

Jennifer steps out of maggots and dust—
  a goddess of trailers, who'll try, as she must,
    to bless, as a cornfield, the rigors of lust—

coming from me into her like a spark,
  glazing with moonlight the rooms where, in dark,
    the ooze of the universe made a new mark.

IV. Virtual Pinball

Cubistic America

like stein on picasso: no use in
a center. things fly apart at odd angles.
the old geezer still reads the new york times.
dominant currents run in and out of philadelphia.
panic in the south— the western seaboard holds fast.
no one's sullen champions like kansas city. all
the time, no one listens to the president. politics
is absence. the jenner sisters emerge as first ladies.
sight lines.
what you see on yahoo
remains invisible on msn. we like
twitter. facebook has been effaced.
smart-phone culture sort of catches on.

fifteen dollars for hamburgers.
health insurance is everyone's secret.
"nothing could've been more special," tonight—

Vatican Gift Card

For my birthday— $50 on a Vatican
gift card. I duly downloaded the Vatican
app. First purchase— a small carton of
communion Necco Wafers— Peach Christ, Apple
Christ, Grape Christ. Why shouldn't the Body
be flavored? Next— a tie-dye "Pope smokes Dope"
tee-shirt, medium, washable, good for summer usage.

Still half the card left. Not enough money for
a plane ticket to the actual place. I traded
with a friend, acquired $25 at Applebee's.
Enough for a good meal. We went together,
and I broke a Cinnamon Christ wafer over Applebee's
hot chocolate, proposed a toast—

"having found our path to the Vatican, all is forgiven"

Wine at Weis

Weis now has two sommeliers roaming the aisles,
looking for prey. Mine is Andre. Last
night, Andre steered me past the yogurt,
butter, frozen meals, Time Magazine Audrey
Hepburn, Freddie Mercury retrospectives (promised
next month: Glenn Close, Badfinger), straight
to Pinot Grigio, Merlot, all kinds of hard seltzers.

I had to ask, "Why can't Weis have vodka, too?"

"You work your way up, we can get you involved in Weis
vodka operations, if the price is right."

"I've got forty dollars in my wallet, and a bunch of credit cards"

"Give me the cards, and we'll get started"

As I walked out an hour later, I thought,
what about Debra Winger and the Climax Blues Band?

Where are they these days?

Tom Petty & the Fuckin' Heartbreakers

We sat ensconced in a screened-in porch,
Wordsworth passed me the pipe and said,
"Look, whatever you think, you'll just have
to get over it, but I'm the one who wrote
Kubla Khan. Mix-ups happen. As I prepare you
for your own adventure, try to understand
that whatever visions manifest, it is your responsibility
to make them palatable the right way. Keep the action
on the surface, please. Alright, away you go…"

"I see it: a pub on Germantown Pike in
Plymouth Meeting, directly across from
the Plymouth Meeting Mall. On one of
the little island spaces. With a parking lot.
An old-fashioned jukebox, or something like it.
The sound of Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers.
The waiting is the hardest part…"

I later thought: I saw a pleasure-dome, too. Hard promises.

You Turn Me On, I'm a Credit Card

Overheard at Dick's Sporting Goods:

"I seen this somewheres I won't mention.
Man in a line pays with a credit card— okay.
Second man tries to pay with a card and the card
don't work— second one he tries, does. Third
guy tries two cards and they both don't work.
Now I'm gettin testy. But the third card does.
And when the fourth guy had to get to a fourth
card to make his purchase, I left the establishment.
Someone want to tell me what that means?"

Golf clubs glistened in the moderate light.

I got into the line, to pay for some curling equipment.

Two-card guy in front of me. Proudly, I didn't need three.

Happy curling!

Anonymous

Lilah Honduras wows everyone in a red two-piece.

No one can resist Lilah Honduras.

Lilah Honduras was seen on Rodeo Drive and in Beverly Hills.

Lilah Honduras has a pissing war going with Taylor Swift.

For the Vogue shoot, Lilah does
Southern Belle, like Natalie Wood in
This Property Is Condemned. Video
of the shoot goes viral. Lilah shops
in NYC, Kate Hudson accosts her in
Gramercy Park. They are seen together
with aperitifs at the Met Gala. Lilah works
her way up, towards the Jenner sisters.

In Middle America somewhere, Lilah scores
with guys who need a random pin-up.

Yahoo and MSN score, as usual.

Vogue does supermarkets to Barnes & Noble
and back, in a red two-piece. Lilah shuts up about the gas crisis.

G.I.T. (Girls in Tights)

The principal of North Penn High School has a problem.

"I fully support my daughter's right to wear midriff shirts.
It's her way of expressing who she is and how she feels
about her body. And you've got a lot of nerve approaching
us for something this dumb with all the girls walking

around in black tights, with their tuchuses up in the air,
other things flappin' in the breeze, slottin' on in there,
even the ones with bubble butts. Surely you've seen—
they look Biblical, like naked babies dipped in ink.

So, I will fight you tooth and nail, but you will not edit
what my daughter wears at North Penn. At least until
you tell the bubble butts to put on real pants, for
chrissakes, and keep their camel toes to themselves."

They're going to try the buy-out approach with this one.

The district's superintendent's got wood.

Ear Piece

The family shopping at Target gets confused.

"What are you, an air traffic controller?"

The cashier was, had to be, adept at multi-tasking.

"That's not what I said to him. Not what I said."

"Uh, could we, like, get our change?"

"Can we speak to your manager, please?"

The manager had an ear piece in, too.

"I want the Sixers by twenty, and that's a wrap."

"We have a complaint. Our cashier wouldn't talk to us normally,
because she had an ear piece in. Can you help us?"

"I want to say, on behalf of Target, that we do care about your feelings.
We will talk to your cashier and make sure it never happens again.
Is there anything else I can help you with?"

Shit. He had a call coming in, too.

The Bakers left Target in a daze. They thought having smart phones
was enough.

The Sixers won by fifteen.

The East Coast

Inflation/deflation, be careful what you look at.

We're taking care of books. Are you?

The scam part, too real/too fake.

Aren't they supposed to be best friends?

We know what it means to live forever. Do you?

Where the action is, is where the action is.

Here's how they actually win.

But the New York Times still travels over here. Anti-matters.

Everyone has to live with their bets, right? Ask Chicago.

She puts Marilyn on a shish kebab, let alone Madonna. Grace?

Whoever pleases the most people, should win. Help us save the country.

Jalen Hurts is a beacon of charisma. The Eagles are fun to watch.

Does Billy Joel still live on Long Island? Jon Bon Jovi does not.

They're impossible, those two.

Pink on the cover of People. All the different people she is.

Look for an Andy Warhol portrait of Daryl Hall.

New Jersey gets to decide, as usual. Right?